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ABSTRACT

The changing world of work requires an evaluation of the ways of thinking about career development and the ways of preparing people for future roles. Canada's participation in a global economy is a reality that must be recognized and translated into career-planning strategies. There are three major global trends that career practitioners must be aware of: the increasingly technological world, the increasingly borderless world, and the increasingly polarized world. Competencies that workers need in order to be successful in the global marketplace are discussed as well as the barriers to their success. In order for career practitioners and workers to be globally minded, they need the following: access to information about the impact of global trends; assistance in seeing themselves as global workers; opportunities for international travel and study; knowledge about cross-cultural competencies; and role models. Both individual and organizational efforts are needed to prepare students and employees for future work roles. (Author/JDM)

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Preparing Globally Minded Students and Employees

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INTRODUCTION

The changing world of work requires us to evaluate ways of thinking about career development and ways of preparing people for future roles. Canada's participation in a global economy is a reality that must be recognized and translated into career-planning strategies. As national economies become increasingly interdependent, organizations depend upon workers from different cultural backgrounds to work together. This is an economic reality for organizations, for Canada as a nation, and for the career success of individuals. Key questions emerge for career practitioners: What are the major global trends that career practitioners need to be informed about? What competencies do workers need in order to be successful in the global marketplace? What barriers deter career success? One of the main issues is helping students and employees become globally minded.

GLOBAL TRENDS, GLOBAL WORKERS

The implications of Canada's participation in a global economy have been discussed in the career-development literature over the past decade (e.g., Arthur in press; Herr 1993a, 1993b; Herr, Amundson, and Borgen 1990; Westwood and Quintrell 1994). There is agreement that to be marketable in an international labour force, people need skills, knowledge about cross-cultural work transitions, and strategies for effective cross-cultural work relationships. Along with knowledge and skills, people need to develop a view of themselves as active participants in a global economy. Career practitioners have a pivotal role in preparing people for future work roles. This requires expertise in how globalization trends affect learning and employment settings, what competencies are required by students and employees, and how to translate that knowledge into effective career-planning strategies.

As we consider the need for students and employees to become globally minded, it may be useful to target key elements of global change. Three fundamental trends are identified: (1) the increasingly technological world, (2) the increasingly borderless world, and (3) the increasingly polarized world (Ordonez 1999).

Along with the rapid pace of technological advances, technology is changing how people participate in an international workforce. Employers can now seek qualified applicants across their country and between countries, through job postings on the Internet. Beck (1998) describes the new role of the "electronic immigrant," as a worker who lives at home but is employed in another country. Technology facilitates the transfer of work products to the employer and eliminates several expenses such as office facilities at the work site.

The borderless world refers to the increased opportunities for travel and business partnerships between countries. Business relationships are becoming more intercultural. Markets and economies have shifted as access to new countries and new consumer groups has opened. Opportunities for participation with partners in other countries have affected the ways that institutions approach work and learning. Many organizations in the public and private sectors, including educational institutions, have developed mandates for internationalization. There is little doubt that economic reasons drive this trend as opportunities abound for entering new markets (Arthur 1995). However, economic reasons for internationalization need to be tempered with social and ethical considerations. If the 1900s can be described as the century of technological advances, this century will be a time to examine the impact of globalization on people's lives. Exporting goods and services to new markets may have profound impacts on local culture and the environment. There are rising concerns about the polarization of populations based on an inequitable distribution of wealth. Globally minded employees of the future are needed who see beyond economic gain and see the importance of considering human and ecological costs.

These trends illustrate the nature of changes in the world of work, expanding opportunities, and emerging social concerns. Among these trends, one common element is relevant for people's career development. The changing world of work demands that people develop a repertoire of competencies to support their career development. Those people who have the foresight to incorporate cross-cultural and international experience into their career development will have a tremendous advantage in the workplace of the future (Arthur in press; Hanson 1990). The future world of work requires workers who are globally minded in their approach to career development.

WHO IS A GLOBALLY MINDED WORKER?

People frequently assume that global workers are people who work in other countries. This unnecessarily limits the view of workers in a global economy. Beyond international employees, it is important to consider workers within Canadian organizations.

There are increasing opportunities in the global marketplace for work assignments to other countries. However, employees must be prepared for expanding job responsibilities and performance expectations associated with living and working in foreign environments. Workers may also be assigned to international projects within their home country but work alongside people from other nations. International work teams require skills for managing as a group when there may be vast cultural differences in norms for behaviour. However, the call for becoming globally minded is broader in scope than a focus only on workers involved with international projects. The increased cultural diversity of Canada's population is mirrored in the workforce (Esses and Gardner 1996). Effective work relationships between members of a culturally diverse workforce are essential for organizational success. Employees require an understanding of the cultural influences that shape their behaviour and the behaviour of co-workers from diverse backgrounds (Arthur in press).

These examples illustrate the need for students and employees to become globally minded in their approach to career development. Whether employment is situated in local or international settings, it appears that work relationships, products, and services are increasingly global.

BARRIERS TO BECOMING GLOBALLY MINDED

Several misconceptions and obstacles are barriers to becoming globally minded. If career practitioners can be made aware of these barriers and provided with strategies, they are in a better position to assist students and employees with their career development.

Lack of information

People have knowledge only about what they are exposed to. Career practitioners need to access information about the impact

of global trends on career development and provide clients with information about those trends.

Lack of relevance
Students and employees need assistance to see themselves as global workers. Their limited perspective may be due to lack of information and lack of understanding about who is a global worker.

Limiting scope to international experience
People can develop a larger global mindset through international travel, and volunteer and work experiences. However, there are many opportunities for building cross-cultural competencies within Canada, in many cases without having to go beyond the local community.

Not including international experience as an option
Career practitioners can encourage students and employees to consider international study and work experiences as viable options in their career planning. Just as we assist people with career decision-making for local situations, people can be encouraged to expand their options to include international experience.

Optional versus core goals of career planning
Cross-cultural experience has previously been on the periphery of career planning. Rather than thinking of it as "optional" or "exotic," cross-cultural competencies need to be a central concern in people's career development.

Lack of role models
Students and employees need to see other people working in roles and hear them talking about their work in ways that demonstrate a global mindset. The best way to build relevance is for role models to give the message, "This is for you!"

Students unaware of study opportunities
Students have many opportunities for practicum placements in the local community with employers who have an international mandate, as well as for study abroad, for learning assignments, and for volunteer opportunities in cross-cultural settings. They can build a portfolio that shows they are globally minded.

Employees unaware of work opportunities
Although organizations have mandates for internationalization, many employees lack information about what that means and how they might become involved. Encourage employees to find professional development activities, projects, and work assignments available in the organization. Proactive approaches are most likely to result in opportunities.

Discrepancies between employer mandates and practices
Many employers with mandates for internationalization are implementing new practices that support their mandates. Beyond policies, employees need information and infrastructure provided in order to support organizational goals.

Lack of career planning within organizations
Organizations have to determine how to manage a workforce that is globally minded, capitalize upon their experiences, and help employees stay directed and focused within their organizations. Otherwise, globally minded employees will seek other employers who are more globally minded in their approach to organizational career development.

In summary, key concerns appear to be accessing information, building relevance, and designing strategies for both individuals and organizations to support a global workforce. Career practitioners can be instrumental in assisting students and employees to be globally minded and in assisting organizations with career development strategies that support both individual and organizational goals.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES FOR GLOBAL WORKERS

How do we prepare students and employees to be successful in the global workforce? What competencies will they need? These questions have been the subject of several forums with employers, teachers, and career-development specialists in Canada. What has emerged from these discussions is agreement that people need preparation beyond knowledge in their field of specialization. People also need to be prepared for working across cultures, both within and beyond the borders of Canada (Arthur in press). The demands of working, studying, and living in a global economy underscore their importance.

Attitudinal competencies

Attitudinal competencies are beliefs about and attitudes towards worker roles in a global economy. People can develop knowledge and skills, but unless they have an attitude that supports their role as a global worker, their participation is likely to be super-ficial. First, people need to understand that culture affects us all. In other words, "what people bring" to their worker role is as important as external factors in the environment. Self-awareness is especially important during interactions with people from culturally diverse backgrounds. This requires workers to appreciate that their way of doing things represents one way and that there are many ways to approach work-related activities. Second, workers who develop a positive mindset about learning from others are more likely to have a positive attitude about cultural diversity. Rather than seeing differences as wrong, they can approach diversity with the possibility of learning. Third, self-awareness about cultural influences and developing a mindset about learning supports cultural empathy, or appreciating the ways that other people view themselves and the world around them. Cultural empathy helps people feel motivated to overcome differences and seek common interests. In many ways, the willingness of students and employees to learn about culture—one's own culture and the culture of others—is a fundamental competency for becoming globally minded.

Knowledge competencies

Students and employees acquire knowledge in the area of specialization they are trained for. However, globally minded employees need to extend their technical expertise to include cultural knowledge. This includes a general understanding of the major cultural groups with whom they work. Changing demographics in Canada have led to corresponding changes in consumer markets and demands for products and services. Employees who have an understanding about the culture of consumers within those markets are a valuable resource to organizations. Further, organizations have a responsibility to educate employees about the cultural diversity found within the workplace. Otherwise, perceived differences and misunderstandings can lead to workplace conflict. Knowledge of other cultures is increasingly becoming a foundation for success in the global workplace.

Knowledge of other cultures is promoted not only to access markets but also to better understand the impact of business and educational practices within those markets. Employees with cultural knowledge are in a better position to advocate for members of cultural groups and to understand the potential hazards in policies and practices. In other words, knowledge competencies for global workers include cultural ethics and a responsibility for behaviour across cultures.

Skill competencies

Beyond attitudinal and knowledge competencies, globally minded students and employees require skills. Although many of these skills are essential for daily living, the demands of working, studying, or living in new cultural contexts underscore their importance. First, due to the increasing mobility across the borders of countries, language skills are emphasized. The capacity to speak more than one language enhances employability in a global economy. However, not all languages are equally valued. The language of dominant groups and markets represents a powerful commodity in business transactions. Second, language skills need to be supplemented with cross-cultural communication skills. Communication for cultural diversity requires competencies for interpreting meanings and responding in culturally appropriate ways. Third, decisions made in one cultural context can have profound implications in another context. As people from culturally diverse backgrounds come together, they bring with them diverse customs and norms for behaviour. Students and employees need to be equipped with decision-making skills that consider the impact of their choices for more than one cultural context. Fourth, when people who hold different cultural values come together, there is greater potential for miscommunication and misunderstandings. Conflict resolution may also be more difficult if people view their interests as competing. Although conflict management and mediation are difficult skills to implement across cultures, they are essential for global workers whose roles depend upon effective working relationships. Fifth, surrounding all of these skills is the need for people to develop competencies for managing culture shock. Although some may argue this is an attitudinal competency that requires self-awareness and knowledge about the personal impact of culture shock, it also requires strategies for managing culture shock. Culture shock, like stress management, requires people to develop a repertoire of strategies that help them stay in situations and adapt in positive ways. Otherwise, they are prone to

withdraw from interactions with other people whose behaviour is different from their own. This can have adverse effects for workers in both local and international settings.

FOSTERING A GLOBALLY MINDED WORKFORCE

Preparing a globally minded workforce will require students and employees to change the ways they think and talk about themselves. Rather than perceiving themselves as workers per se, people need to develop a mindset that they are global workers and view cross-cultural interactions as the norm for participation in the labour force. This will require considerable attitudinal change by students and employees, and also the people of influence around them. It will require teachers and parents to talk about the career development of their children and students in unprecedented ways. It will require career practitioners to help their clients see how they can become globally minded employees. Although only a portion of the adult population has begun to see the relevance of the global economy for their worker roles, they can leave a legacy for the workers of the future. Finally, organizations are challenged to consider the implications of their policies and practices in a global marketplace. This will require additional attention to the recruitment of globally minded employees, but also strategies to support their career development within organizations. Both individual and organizational efforts are needed to prepare students and employees for future work roles.

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